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REVIEWS

THREE SPANISH AMERICAN TEXTS

- (a) **Cuentos Hispanoamericanos**, with grammar reviews and exercises. Edited by Cincinato G. B. Laguardia, A. B., Assistant Professor of Modern Languages, United States Naval Academy. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1920. 12mo., xv + 247 pp. (184 text, exercises, etc., 63 vocabulary).

This collection contains twenty-one stories by twelve different authors, chosen from seven countries of Spanish America. It is unfortunate that so large a collection should not be more representative geographically. Certainly Mexico and Uruguay, for examples, have produced so many excellent short-story writers that they could well have a place here. The editor says the selections "are representative of what is being done in the short story in South America," which might justify the omission of Mexico. He includes, however, three stories by a writer from San Salvador. One selection, "El Provinciano Renegado," by Joaquín Vallejo (Chile) is not a story at all, but an article on life in the provinces by a writer long since dead (1858). Several of South America's best literary men are represented: Ricardo Palma, Rubén Darío, Blanco-Fombona, Manuel Ugarte, and younger men of note, such as Baldomero Lillo, Felipe Sassone, etc.

The book, according to the editor, aims to meet the needs of a second-year high-school class in Spanish or a second-semester college class, and is edited with this in view. The stories are divided into "lessons" of varying length, each lesson being followed by a *cuestionario*, various suggestions concerning themes to be written, some phrase drills, English sentences to be done into Spanish, points for grammar review, and *finally* explanatory notes on the text. Many teachers prefer not to have the continuity of a story broken in this way. If stories are to be used for class drill in conversation and composition—and the writer questions very much the pedagogy of this very common practice—why not let the class finish the story and then discuss it, write compositions on it, translate it by piecemeal back into Spanish, and juggle with it in any other way the teacher wishes? It is very doubtful whether a second-year high-school class could or should do any of these things. It is really not necessary for them to be able to say: "The Peruvians fought until the last round had been fired." They should *talk* and *talk*, but about everyday, commonplace things until a facility with the language has been acquired, and this is not done in the second year of high school.

These stories are excellent class reading and are very valuable as such. The vocabulary is well prepared, and the book is remarkably free from typographical errors. A very accurate map of South America, in colors, forms the frontispiece. Some illustrations would have added much to the attractiveness of the book, and are especially desirable in Spanish-American texts, since the average teacher is much less familiar with the countries described than

with Spain. With the present interest in Spanish America, texts of this kind are welcome and should contribute to a better knowledge of our Southern neighbors.

- (b) **Por Tierras Mejicanas**, by Manuel Uribe-Troncoso, sometime Professor in the University of Mexico. Illustrated. World Book Company, Yonkers-on-Hudson, New York, 1919. 12mo., xv + 179 pp. (127 text, 50 vocabulary).

Professor Uribe-Troncoso has written a very sympathetic book on Mexico, in simple style, suitable for high-school students very early in their course. He says very aptly: "There is a dearth of works in easy Spanish to serve as stepping-stones to the masterpieces of literature." No exercises in conversation are included, for the author says that students have enough to do to write the exercises in the grammar or method, leaving "little time for exercises based upon the reading text, and it has been deemed likely that many teachers would welcome a book that demands nothing more than an understanding of the subject-matter." With this the writer entirely agrees. It is a praiseworthy "sin of omission." The vocabulary is complete and the meanings carefully chosen.

The text is a comprehensive survey of Mexico. The first part describes its geography, climate, and principal cities. The second part gives a brief outline of the history of Mexico from the earliest times. It is interesting, though not always stressing the most important facts and not always absolutely accurate. For instance, we find on page 67 the statement concerning Texas: "En 1845, se declaró independiente." Texans are rather proud of the nine years of independence from 1836 to 1845, when the State was annexed to the American Union. The historical sketch comes down to the Constitution of 1917, ending very appropriately with these words: "Del éxito de su aplicación en Méjico, el tiempo dirá." The third part treats of the national resources, mining, agriculture, commerce, and railways. The railway map on page 102 is not entirely accurate nor up to date. For instance, the chief city of the West Coast, Mazatlán, is not on this map, nor is Acapulco, which has been an important port in Mexican history. The last part contains two excellent chapters: "Cómo viven actualmente los mejicanos," and "Los problemas de Méjico." The former is a splendid treatment of the national life and existing social conditions, calling attention to many errors that are commonly made in judging the Mexican people. Finally, the problems of race and of lack of education that confront the Mexican government are outlined in the last chapter. Nowhere can there be found a more succinct discussion of these problems, and the book should be read by every student of Spanish in the Southwest, at least.

The text is preceded by a very valuable list of books on Mexico. The book is well printed and bound, the illustrations are interspersed throughout the text and add much to its understanding, as well as to the appearance of the volume.

- (c) **Páginas Sudamericanas**, by Helen Phipps, Instructor in Spanish in the University of Texas. Illustrated. World Book Company, Yonkers-on-Hudson, New York, 1920. 12mo., vi + 208 pp. (181 text, 25 vocabulary).

Miss Phipps has attempted to do for South America what (*b*) does for Mexico. If she has not succeeded as well, it is largely because the task is greater, covering so wide a field. The author's intention is "to supply conversation and composition material for classes taught by the direct method," and with this in view the sentences are simple and often stilted, showing the handiwork of an American teacher rather than of a native. They are, however, carefully written and free from grammatical errors. The book contains much valuable information, but does not arouse the same interest as the more spontaneous composition of (*b*). It is doubtful whether any "adapted" or "constructed" text can do this. As a handbook to aid the teacher in presenting South America to a class the book has great value, and is, perhaps, the best of its kind now available. While the style lacks variety, the treatment of each country is concise and does not become tiresome. The author groups the countries of South America under four heads: "La Costa Occidental" (Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile); "La Región del Río de la Plata" (Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay); "El Valle del Amazonas" (Brazil); "La Cuenca del Mar de las Antillas" (Venezuela, Colombia). The history and geography of each is outlined, and in several cases separate chapters are devoted to certain products, as "El Cacao, la Industria Salitrera, la Hierba Mate, etc."

Unlike (*b*), each chapter is followed by a rather lengthy "cuestionario," which may be of value to the teacher of the direct method who knows but little Spanish. Those who speak the language well—Should they teach the direct method if they do not?—will probably prefer to form their own questions. In make-up the book is similar to (*b*). The maps and illustrations are good and help in holding the student's interest.

The ignorance of Spanish America among present-day high-school graduates is amazing. Among answers given recently in a college freshman class were these: "Montevideo is the capital of Brazil," "I don't know where Havana is," "Cuba is in South America," "Lake Titicaca is between the United States and Canada," "Bogotá is the capital of London." Apparently geography is not *taught* in our public schools in these days. Miss Phipps's little book may be very profitably used in our Spanish classes to teach some of the things the student should have learned elsewhere.

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Bosquejo Histórico de la Literatura Chilena: Domingo Amunátegui Solar. Santiago de Chile. Imprenta Universitaria. 1920. 8°. 669 pp.

Dr. Domingo Amunátegui Solar, Rector of the University of Chile, has recently had a limited number of reprints made of a series of studies published by him in the *Revista Chilena de Historia y Geografía*. This limited edition is explained by the author's intention to publish another in Paris shortly.

After the exhaustive study of the Colonial Literature of Chile by José Toribio Medina, a briefer treatment was needed for students who desired